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ABSTRACT

Future student services in higher education which will include activities, counseling, and advising require a clear perception of contemporary students and those services that will assist in meeting their needs. The task is to further examine the diversity of students' needs and determine implications for programs and services. Student need areas include academic interests, co-curricular activities, mental and physical health, economic support, and family/social commitment. Counselors need to be aware of the increasing importance of student employment and students' increasing interest in being financially secure. Counselors should be aware of the student/institution and student/major "fit." Counselors should accommodate the needs of married students. Student participation in clubs and organizations is a reflection of discernible linkage needs of students. Important issues for college counselors include awareness of the multitude of student needs; the diversity among students; students' social commitments and family pressures; the need for activities and employment; and the influences of the campus environment. The counselor's purpose is to listen to, encourage, and assist students. A clear perception of the diversity of students and their changing needs is required. (ABL)

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THE DIVERSITY OF STUDENT NEEDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

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The increasing diversity of student needs, interests, capabilities, and expectations provides for meaningful trends in todays colleges and universities. Future student services in Higher Education to include activities, counseling and advising, require a clear perception of contemporary students and those services that will assist in meeting their current needs.

What brings students to college? Why are they here and what are their expectations? We understand, in part, the vast complexity of needs, capabilities, motivation, and skills that each student brings to the campus. The task is to further examine the diversity of students' needs and determine the implications for programs and services.

The college student can often be perceived by observing different, yet interrelated needs. The following chart conceptualizes five various student need areas as related to student services.

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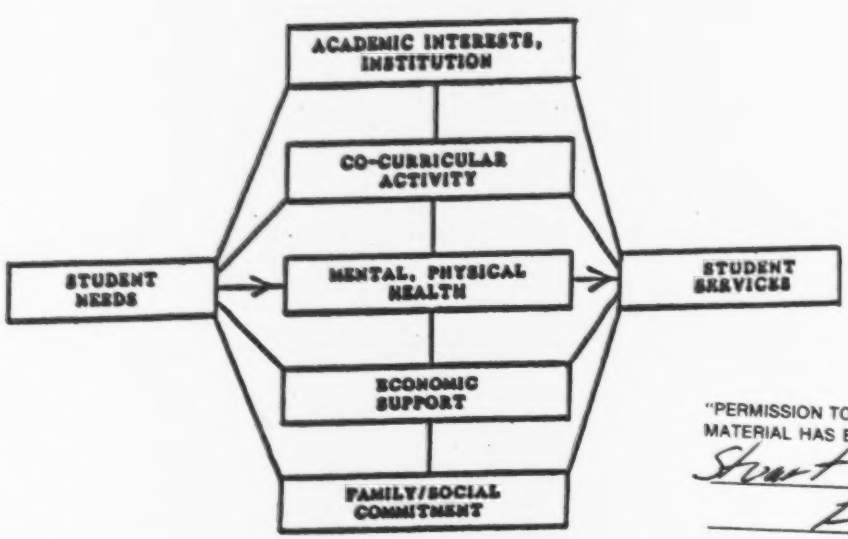

STUDENT NEEDS AND SERVICES
Dr. Stuart L. Farber, C.S.U.L.B., 1986

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We note that college students are usually found balancing at least a triad of needs at any given time. Job, school, and social or family commitments are areas contributing to students' higher education needs. Health and well-being, emotional and physical, are seen as qualities often related to the direct needs of job, school, and social/family commitments. It is important to note that student priorities may not be the same as University priorities and that obtaining an education may not be their highest priority.

To further understand the complexities of students, certain questions require attention. To what degree are they satisfied with their current job? What is their commitment to academic pursuits, co-curricular life, and campus activities? What is the extent of family support, both financial and emotional? What expectations does the family and the student have of higher education? These are timely and important questions that require our concern and attention as we consider the students' own personal development.

The Job

At least half of all college students were employed in the 1985-86 academic year, and the trend is for increased student employment. According to the January 15th issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education, more students are working today due to spiraling tuition costs, greater career consciousness, and a reduction in the value of student aid. (4:29) The need to make the right job decision has also caused students to feel less able to explore within the job market. According to Dr. Clyde Crego, Director of Counseling at California State University, Long Beach, students feel more compelled to make career decisions early and to make the "correct" decision. This factor is considered to be a cause for considerable student anxiety. (3)

The United States House of Representatives recently approved changes in the college work-study program which, this year, will provide wage subsidies to 808,000 students employed in public and non-profit agencies.

Officials in government and universities are helping students find jobs to help meet expenses, develop new skills, explore career work, and possibly assist community projects or services. "People now expect students to work while at school", says Howard Hayghe of the U.S. Department of Labor, and the government is attempting to help. (4:29)

To help meet expenses, more students are holding jobs and working longer hours. Counselors and advisors need to be aware of the importance of student employment to the student. To suggest lightly that students change or drop their work schedules to meet class needs, might sound somewhat impractical to today's work-motivated and fiscally concerned student.

We are reminded that the student is working in order to serve several basic and secondary needs. Food, shelter, clothing, tuition, books, transportation, and family are all costs that must be accounted for if a student is to persist in higher education. Persistence alone will not determine success or failure in the classroom. We might assume, however, that having met financial needs, a student will demonstrate less anxiety towards academic pursuits.

The students' interest in finances is apparently going to continue throughout their college experience and beyond. The 1985 American Freshman National Norms, conducted by Alexander W. Astin at the Graduate School of Education at UCLA, indicates that the proportion of students aspiring to money-oriented business careers has continued to rise since the 1970's. Nearly 24% stated an interest in business careers and 70% of the students said they were in college "to be able to make more money". Twenty-one percent of the students further indicated that it was "essential" or "very important" to be "very well-off financially". (1:2) It is noted that many Freshmen are indicating a career choice in higher paying fields of employment.

Institutional Types

As we consider the students and their various academic needs and interests, we are also aware of the differing kinds or types of colleges and universitites. A seldom accomplished advising task is the matching of the students' needs, interests, and capabilities with the best suited institution. We are well aware of the possible stress involved when an institution is perceived by the student as cold and unfriendly, or for other reasons, considered undesirable.

Student anxiety may also result when the environment is negatively perceived by the student and their friends. Studies in "field theory" psychology would suggest to us the interrelationship between individual perception of a hostile environment and his or her subsequent overt behavior. Kurt Lewin in his writing "Field Theory in Social Science", suggests that we may refer to a group or institution in the same manner as we speak of life space in individual psychology. (6:XI)

Perhaps one of the most intriguing and meaningful tasks for todays counselors in higher education is attempting to determine whether the student is, in fact, attending the university for which he or she might be best suited. Advisors need to pose two questions. Are students studying the right subject at the right institution and what is the perceived interaction of the student and the campus environment?

Environmental research studies by C. Robert Pace have indicated that considerable differences do exist among institutional settings. Therefore, individual institutional characteristics and personal individual experiences may explain the extent to which different student and institutional outcomes are to be expected. (8:15)

In his environmental studies, using the College and University Environmental Scales (CUES), Pace determined that a significant difference was perceived by students between types of institutions. The use of CUES provides a characterization of the institution as a whole and further studies by Pace and others determined a "typology" of institutions in higher education. The CUES institutional typology differentiates the following kinds of colleges and universities: (9:18)

General Liberal Arts

Denomination Liberal Arts

Selective Liberal Arts

Teachers Colleges

State Colleges

Engineering and Science

Selective Universities

General Universities

Increasingly, institutional studies refer to the value or success of college experiences as the result of the interaction between students and the total college environment. As Lewis Mayhew states, "students act on the environment and the environment acts on students and each is affected by the reaction of the other". (7:132)

The environment of an institution can be further examined by observing individual student characteristics and those experiences provided by the institution. The task is that of determining the influence of the institutional setting, students' needs, and the interaction that takes place.

In one UCLA alumni study, efforts were directed at the students' perception of educational benefits and selected college variables to include that

of the institutional type. In the study by Farber, institutions and respective benefits were perceived as significantly different. Eight thousand, three hundred, and twenty alumni having attended seventy-four colleges and universities also gave high ratings to the educational benefits they received and to the value of contacts with faculty and counselors. (5:43,110)

Social/Family Commitment

Colleges report that as many as 50% of their students are married or have similar kinds of family commitments. At California State University, Long Beach, nearly 50% of the students are married and most of the remainder live away from their parents. We are not concerned, at this point in time, with the pros and cons of marriage but rather the implications for college life. We are concerned with the fact that a large portion of our students are in fact married, and subsequently bring those associated needs and concerns to the campus.

What are the needs of married students? What goals do they have? What responsibilities are they concerned with and what expectations do they and their families have of higher education? Student Services, Counselors and Advisors need to be aware of these kinds of questions and assist students in understanding various priorities and benefits.

Additional questions include, how does the students' family regard the time and effort given away from home to the college? Is there real family support and encouragement for the student? Does he or she feel good about the time away from family given to the demands and rigors of college life?

Studies suggest that many students are expected to contribute to their respective families' income. This fact may be true for the single student as well as those who are married. The pressure on the student to provide

financial support for the family may be extensive and give cause to their lack of concentration on the studies at hand.

Another social consideration is the commitments students make to each other resulting from their living arrangements. Students away from home live together today in a household of differing ages, sexes, interests, and needs. They seem to have strong feelings about their part in living arrangements and in their dependency upon others to share the responsibilities. These social commitments and needs require our understanding and concern.

Co-Curricular Activity

The opportunity to participate in clubs and organizations enhances a student's complete college experience and relates in a positive manner with their perception of the University.

At CSULB, the growing student participation in clubs and organizations is a reflection of the growth of the University and, moreover, of a clearly discernible need of students. The need for students to belong is real and developmental in nature. The opportunity to join a club, to make new friends, and to take part in campus life, can greatly assist a student's adaptation to college and future personal development.

The trend for increased organization activity is very positive at CSULB. There are currently 27 greek letter organizations showing a 38% growth in two years and in addition 300 clubs and organizations for a 29% growth in the same period of time. The total number of students currently participating in club and organization activities exceeds 6,000 students.

With a population of 32,000 students, the CSULB campus environment can appear overwhelming and unfriendly to a student who doesn't know anyone. By being involved in a fraternity, sorority, club, organization, recreation

activity, or student government, students can find friends, participate in activities, and feel more a part of their campus community.

Linkages

The trend for increased involvement in student organizations is attributed to the need for and interest in "out of classroom" activities. Students have the need to meet others, to relate with each other and to make sense out of their college experiences. They need help in joining the pieces together and in establishing what social scientists refer to as "linkages" or how things fit together.

Not only do students feel more a part of the campus by participating in clubs and organizations, but many organizations are also engaged in community activity. This provides the students a direct contact to the community. In Long Beach, the greek letter organizations work with the Long Beach Lung Association, the Red Cross, the Disabled Center, Muscular Dystrophy, the Cedar House, and the Special Olympics. The University-Community contact, through organization activities, can prove helpful in future study and employment.

Diversity

Ethnic groups, honor societies, user associations, and students having the same majors in common are just some of the micro-communities evolving on the campus. The Muslim Student Union, a 60 member organization made up of converted Christians and Moslems, hold weekly meetings and prayer activity.

Students who own MacIntosh computers have joined together and developed the MacIntosh Users Group. The fellow computer owners have regular meetings and discuss software, format, menus, and ways to network with each other.

While some work on computers, other students are looking for career opportunities in real estate. Being a member of the Real Estate Society has enabled several students to obtain internships.

Some of the newer and larger clubs are brought together by students of the same ethnic and religious backgrounds. The Korean Student Association has well over 120 members and is still growing due to the popularity of the organization. The Chinese Student Association, Vietnamese Student Association, and Japanese Student Association are other growing and developing Asian student organizations on campus.

It seems that clubs and organizations have a substantial role to play in current University student life. They provide diverse programs, activities, and social contacts as they serve to meet their respective students' needs. Meeting these students' needs is an urgent role for contemporary, co-curricular student life activity.

Summary and Closure

We have touched on the current needs of contemporary college students and the need to review student services and programs. This provides the opportunity to study each student service area and determine if adequate consideration has been given to the multiplicity of perceived student needs.

We visualize the five previously mentioned students' needs areas and pose these questions: Is there an awareness of the multitude of student needs? Do advisors and counselors realize the diversity of students in higher education today? Is there an awareness of students' family pressures, co-curricular needs, the need for employment, and social commitments? Do we consider the institutional setting and the influences of the campus environment?

We direct our thoughts along the lines of the diversity of students and their changing needs. I have suggested a clear perception of students and those services provided to assist their needs, interests, and capabilities.

The students standing before us today present a vast diversity and multitude of human needs and concerns. Our purpose is to listen, to engage, and to assist. We have much to learn, services to modify, and programs to begin. Good luck and best wishes.

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